



MINISTRY
PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Program Director

Nehawu Leadership

Denosa Leadership

Hospitals Management

All Nursing Staff

Retired and Professional Nurses

Officials from the Department of Health

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Comrades

Good Morning to All

It is a wonderful privilege and honor for me to join you here today as part of this very important day, International Nurses Day. The day is yearly celebrated on the 12th of May which is the birthday of a person considered to be the founder and pioneer of modern nursing , Florence Nightingale. This day has been put aside every year to express our sincere gratitude to those individuals who form the backbone of our health system. This year international day aims to reshape perceptions of nursing, demonstrating how strategic investment in nursing can bring considerable economic and societal benefits under the theme “ ***Our Nurses , Our Future , The Economic power of care*** “

Despite being the backbone of health care , nursing often faces financial constraints and societal undervaluation. International Nurses Day aims to

reshape perceptions , demonstrating how strategic investment in nursing can bring considerable economic and societal benefits “ (International Council of Nurses)

The purpose of today as I was informed is the memorial lecture in honor of Mama Dora Nginza legacy. This happens at a very important time in the history of our struggle as we celebrate 30 years of our democracy. The month of may is Workers Month due to the struggle that were waged by the workers. We meet on the day Tata Mandela addressed Parliament as the first black President of South Africa.

Nursing has been a profession with high standards and a strong sense of public service. There are few people whose lives have not been touched by nurses, given reassurance that nurses provide care every hour of the day and every day of the year. Being a nurse is a very special calling, it is a call from God. Today we are paying tribute to and saluting the dedicated nurses who have been making a real contribution and dedication to the health system in our Country and the World.

Dora Nginza was born on the farm Baviaanspoort near Cradock on the 17th of October in 1891. She trained as a nurse at Victoria Hospital in Alice under the mentorship of Dr Neil MacVicar. She was a pioneer who trained the first two black professional nurses in South Africa , at Victoria Hospital and it was under the influence of one of those two nurses , that the young Dora was recruited into the three year nursing education programme. She passed the qualifying examination registration as a nurse at Provincial hospital. In 1919 she became the sole health visitor in New Brighton as the only women and had the mammoth task of rendering a health care service to the community of mostly poor and ignorant people.

From her clinic housed in an Anglo Boer War army barracks she cared for the ill, dispensed medicine, educated pregnant women and mothers, and delivered and nursed babies. She single handedly delivered a service which today would be called comprehensive health care and be delivered by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals. A major breakthrough, and early recognition of her work , came only months later during the typhus fever epidemic. Medical practitioners were unable to diagnose the nature of the disease but Sister Dora correctly identified typhus as the cause of the epidemic.

Working alone and with scanty resources Sister Dora was a nurse, cleaner, messenger, dispenser and cook. In recognition of her excellent progress, the authorities relocated the clinic to larger premises with facilities to accommodate 18 patients, and supplied Sister Dora with a staff of one assistant nurse, a cook and a messenger cleaner. In 1923, with the incorporation of New Brighton into the Port

Elizabeth municipality , the patients were transferred into Port Elizabeth municipality and that allowed her to proceed with a community health service.

Nursing pioneer Dora Nginza established the first professional health service in the Port Elizabeth township of New Brighton and opened a path into the nursing profession for thousands of black people. In her service to the community Sister Dora maintained the highest standards of patient care and expected the same with her. Her contributions resulted in her receiving numerous awards and accolades. She was named A! Nobantu (Mother of the Nation) and the Newell Congregational Church hall was named Ah Nobantu hall in her honour.

The New York Council for African Affairs presented her with a gold watch , the first time the award was presented to an African woman for exceptional service to black communities and the South African Nursing Association awarded her Honorary Life Membership. The Dora Nginza Hospital opened in 1979 was named in her honour as a testimony to her commitment to her profession and her community. The then University of Port Elizabeth now Nelson Mandela University awarded Sister Dora posthumous degree Doctor Curations Honoris Causa for the development of health care in the City.

Program Director , through your dedication and commitment as nurses , we have made significant progress in addressing and expressing issues of accessibility and equity and bringing hope to our citizens. You therefore have reason to feel proud for participating in reshaping service delivery in our country. It is without any doubt that all of us agree that our government have changed the situation for the better in the health system since 1994. As we are celebrating 30 years of our democracy, we are confident that nursing profession and the health system has changed for the better. You have done the nation proud because of your sterling commitment. The passing into law of NHI is another critical milestone in ensuring that health services are accessible to all citizens. In the signing ceremony President Cyril Ramaphosa said :

“ Access to quality , decent healthcare should not depend on one’s ability to pay. The current situation does not serve the poor , does not serve the middle-class and does not serve the country “

Chairperson the Department of Public Service and Administration is spearheading professionalization of the public service and that is indeed talking to people like Dora Nginza who have held high the flag for professionalisation not all for health services but for public Service as a whole.. To show our commitment in changing the situation for the better in the public service , parliament has passed two important

Bills in order to ensure the sector is transformed and professionalized hence our Motto as the Department , “ We Belong , We Care and We Serve

It is the future of nursing as a profession, not its past that makes me confident about the young women and men undertaking their nursing education today. The nursing profession has come a very long way. It is in this light that I want to encourage you not to give up. Your caring hands and loving hearts are needed more than ever, Nurses are still the first people you see when you enter the public health service. You are the core of health services, and I am grateful to you for the work that you are doing.

I commend, recognize and appreciate the contribution you make to the healing of individuals, families, communities and our nation. Remember when a person dies , a nurse is the one carting out last duties (ocima amehlo) as well as tidy up the person in dignity. Every single person living has come across a nurse in their lifetime. Whether it is a small clinic or in a hospital , nurses work tirelessly for the health of families and communities.

Investments in nursing can be strategically made to education , jobs , leadership and service delivery , as laid out by the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery 2021-2025. These are policy priority areas based on global evidence that were adopted by the 74th World Health Assembly as a resolution. I call upon all of you on this important day to remember the example of Dora Nginza and make the necessary investments in this vital and noble calling.

Let me remind you about the ANC 2024 Election Manifesto which states that , the ANC will ensure health care for all through :

- Promoting healthy lifestyles and preventive health care campaigns
- Move decisively towards implementing the National Health Insurance , strengthening health infrastructure , training personnel and creating a single electronic health record.
- Expand the ideal Clinic programme to improve quality of care.
- Strengthen financial management and supply chain management in public health institutions.

- Collaborate with other countries on research and development of traditional medicine.
- Leverage new technologies like telemedicine and artificial intelligence in health care.

Similarly the 2024 January 8th Statement of the ANC states that :

“ Promoting universal access to quality health care has made a tremendous impact. This includes free access to health care for pregnant women and children under the age of 5 years to reduce infant and maternal mortality, and sustained investment in the building of healthcare facilities in even the most remote areas of our country. Accordingly, life expectancy has progressively improved. This improvement is related to advances we have made in, among others , the rollout of a comprehensive HIV/AIDS programme , with more than 5.8 million people on antiretroviral treatment , and steady progress in the fight against TB. Similarly, the success in curbing mother to child transmission of HIV , together with our child support grants , has helped reduce the rate of infant mortality “.

In closing, 29th May 2024 is the elections day, we must go and vote in numbers. Let's encourage our families, friends, neighbors and all residents in our areas to exercise their democratic right. We must all pray for the peaceful elections, remember to do the right thing when you vote. You know where you come from and who made your profession to be what it is , Vote ANC the only hope for the people of South Africa . It is now or never, now is the time vote for a brighter future.

I thank you.